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A center for unity in Great Britain

Laity 20 years after the Council

A piece of land in the sun

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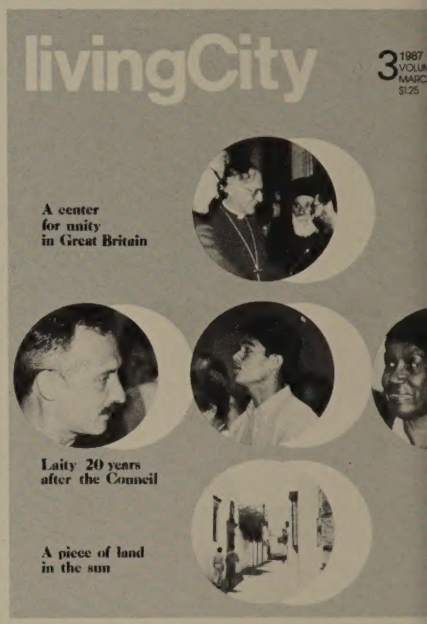

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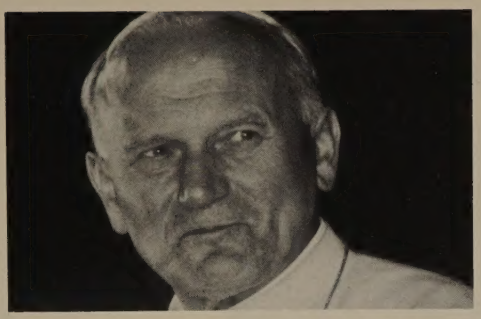
A "CENTER FOR UNITY" IN GREAT BRITAIN: an ecumenical meeting of bishops-friends of the Focolare took place in the new center.



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Laity 20 years after the Council

Chiara Lubich recently offered these insights on how we can better live our vocation as laity.

The year 1987 is an important year for the Catholic world. Preparations are underway in fact for the Synod which will take place in autumn on "The vocation and mission of the laity in the Church twenty years after Vatican II."

This is an important year, therefore, for the Catholic laity, but, I believe, also for other Christians in whose Churches the role of the laity has often been given importance.

And we, who wish to be committed Catholics, are also preparing ourselves for this Synod, through prayer, which should never be lacking, and with the work asked of us.

But, who is the lay person? This is a question often being asked in the Church today. How can we identify this person; how can we define his or her characteristics?

Many are trying to respond to this question. One would not, in fact, want to describe the laity by starting from what they are not, that is neither a priest nor a religious. One would want to define who the lay person **is**.

For this reason we also want to give our contribution to the study of this topic and affirm something which may seem quite obvious.

Lay people are Christians and, as such, have been baptized, have received confirmation, are followers of Christ and his gospel. For this reason they must fully live that which Jesus wants from them and, among other things, work primarily

at expanding the kingdom of God, at building up the Church. Since lay people live in the midst of the world, they will bring there the light of the gospel permeating all things with it.

This is what the lay person is for us: a follower of Christ, possessing a clearly defined profile, having the two-fold task of building the Church and of evangelizing the world.

As lay people who belong to the Focolare Movement we find ourselves reflected in a laity of this kind. Our Movement, in fact, has an aspect which is more spiritual, we might say, through which we work so that Christ may grow in us, among us and among many. This is what is implied in building up the Church. Then there is a more concrete aspect in which we work to bring the spirit of Christ into the various expressions of human activity.

We are comfortable with this definition of the lay person. This is why we feel syntonic with the definition given by Vatican II in this regard. This year we would like to live our specific vocation as lay people always better, in order to give, also in this way, our contribution to the Synod.

Let us try to be true lay people of the Church, that is, authentic followers of Christ. Followers of Christ live his words, and all that the Sacred Scriptures suggest.

A phrase of Scripture that we have recently been trying to put into practice which emphasizes the importance of mutual love is: "Welcome one another, therefore, as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God."[1]

By living this phrase we will maintain firm the foundation upon which the Church is built. By putting this phrase into practice with other Christians there where we serve together in an ecclesial structure, we will give our specific contribution to the development of the Church. If we live this phrase in families and in the different areas of work and activity in society, we will lay down the most important basis toward the achievement of a Christian renewal of laws and structures.

Let each one of us put it into practice in our own environment. Let us welcome every person as Christ has welcomed us. He has and does welcome us every day any time we turn to him. Whoever we are: sinners or saints, young or old, beautiful or not, healthy or sick, people of importance or of no importance, he welcomes us always: everyone.

We are so certain that he listens to us, that he forgives us and welcomes us that we would never think for a moment otherwise. Let us, then, do the same with every neighbor. Let them find in us people who are always open, always well disposed, always ready to welcome them.

Let us live like this, and may it be for the glory of God.

Chiara

1) Romans 15:7.

A Piece of Land in the Sun

The seed of the spirituality of the Focolare is taking root in the Caribbean.

by Sharry Silvi

It was snowing, a light, powdery snow, covering streets and highways when I left New York for Santo Domingo early in the morning. I was to catch a 7:00 a.m. flight. The silence was almost complete as I travelled to the airport with a couple of friends willing to brave the early morning in an almost enchanted atmosphere of white reflections in the dark.

The enchantment, however, was soon broken when we arrived at the airport, busy and crowded as ever. Before leaving, my friends briefly prayed with me while children, wide awake at that time of the day were running around us. We asked God to send his angels to guide me, the light of the Spirit to help me discern his will and, spread his kingdom. To Mary we asked that she be at my side always, gentle and strong, the mother who opens the way, and accompanies every venture to a safe conclusion.

Then I was on my own in a full plane, with a sense of newness in me, a desire to accomplish it by living the Word of Life that was speaking in fact of being a "new creation by letting Jesus live in us." All new, a new beginning, a jump

A group of Gen (youth of the Focolare Movement) in Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic.

into a plan of God still to be unfolded before me.

The airport "de las Americas" welcomed me with the sun as always. How beautiful this country is. I am not surprised that Columbus called it "the most beautiful piece of land, human eyes have ever seen." On the way out I saw a mosaic of Mary under the title of Our Lady of the Highest Grace, (la Virgen de Alta Gracia) highly honored and venerated here in the Dominican Republic. The colorful portrait reminded me of my pact with her and I felt so strongly she would be with me.

Then, a wave of joy and enthusiasm, of love and friendship, of old and new smiling faces seemed to cover me, carry me on and push me into a new piece of this divine adventure which was to watch with ever new surprise the development of a work of God.

And I plunged into it starting with the Gen school. Beautiful, enthusiastic and vibrant young people who search for the truth welcomed the demands of this gospel based life of unity that I portrayed to them, together with other focolarine who were present. And it seemed possible, even easy to enflame the world with the love of God as we planned our days ahead all committed to build a united world.

Then a surprise. Some friends who had tried to make an appointment with the President of the Republic for the 6th of January received a sudden call. Yes, he was willing to meet me and hear what I had to say. A large desk, an old, kind man, almost totally blind awaited me in a spacious room of the Government Palace. January 6 is a very festive day in Santo Domingo; it is the day of the Three Kings, a day of gift giving. "We do not have gold or myrrh, Mr. President" I told him, "but the wonderful story of a work of God." "So tell me," he replied. And I did while he listened in a silence, interrupted only by a light chuckle when I spoke of what could happen if politicians worked in unity, for "Where two or three" of them are united in the name of Jesus[1] there is a new politics ... All is new ... a new united world.... A wonderful story! When I told him that the Movement had spread throughout the island he replied, "From what I hear I am not surprised, not surprised.... I myself could listen all day."

The press was waiting for me outside the door. "What did you ask for?" they wanted to know. "Nothing," I replied. "It is such a wonderful Movement, so many know it, why not the President?" It made sense. We gave him a beautifully carved candle, symbol of what Focolare stands for: the fire of the love of God. We promised to come back.

(right) A street in the colonial section of Santo Domingo where the Focolare will soon open a center. (above) A family of the Movement.

Yes, to come back; there is so much to do. A land of great contrasts, of wealth and poverty, of warm hearted, generous people.... A lot to do, a lot that can be accomplished with visions, with an ideal of unity.

We celebrated the soon to be opened Focolare at the community meeting. I showed slides of Mariapolis Luminosa. The people in front of me were already a piece of a new world, a united world. An evening of sharing and songs, hours to review our commitment to unity as God intends it.

Then it was time to leave Santo Domingo after precious moments with the Apostolic Nuncio at his house at the center of town.

Then off I was with some friends to visit La Romana, and most importantly, Higuey where the shrine of Mary, and bishop Polanco were waiting for us.

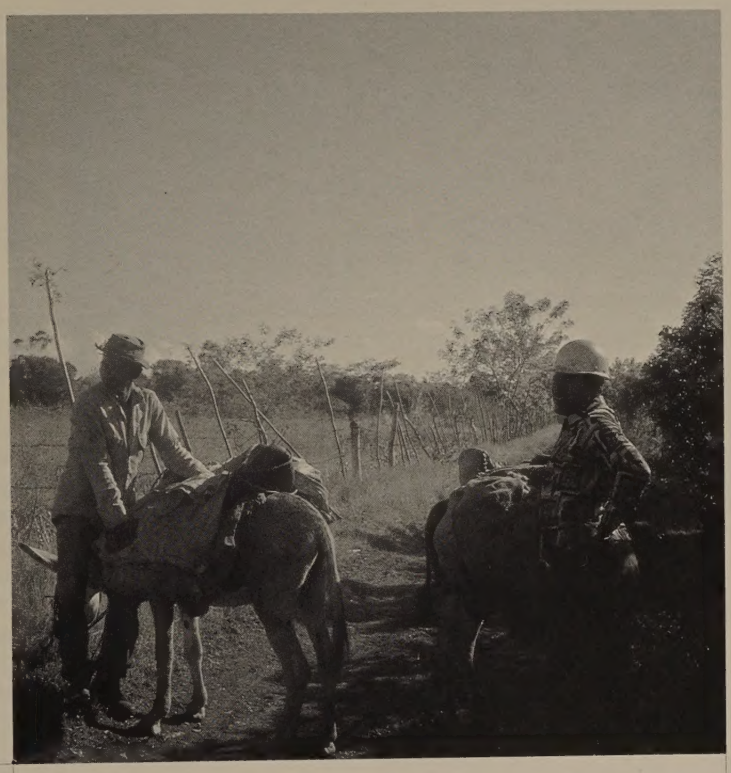
The bishop blessed us and prayed that Mary would encourage us on in this town where everything speaks of her.

Then the Church, solid and solemn. The tabernacle is at the center, then high above is the picture of Our Lady of Alta Gracia. There is something about shrines.... I paused in front of the tabernacle. I had many things in my heart and I began to list them. A long list.... It was beautiful to be in Higuey, a moment of unity between heaven and earth.

At La Romana old friends again were awaiting. A town with busy people, and tourists, and again a group of Focolare. We spoke until late into the night about our call to sanctity, our desire to reach it together, our trust in the one who can lead us there. Time ran fast ahead and no one seemed to notice. Early the following morning we were on a jeep visiting land that had been offered for a Mariapolis Center. People selling yucca passed us by. We visited the cloistered nuns, and families and parish communities. We stopped at a home for subnormal children. I played with them for a while ... whatsoever you do to the least.... Who is really the least? They were so loving, they played with me....

Then Santo Domingo again: a stop at the house that God's providence has prepared for the Focolare which will open in March. A big house that will make it possible to start workshops and courses of formation. Archbishop Lopez was happy with it and his blessing filled us with joy.

And again the airport. Short, intense days were behind us, new places before us. Puerto Rico is only 45 minutes away.



(right) A view of the country side where the Movement is also spreading. (In this photo farmers are selling yucca).
(below)A group attending a Focolare meeting in St. Croix, Virgin Islands.

New faces, friendly and eager to hear the news. How beautiful is a family united in mutual love.

And on again, to St. Croix. Bishop O'Malley at the airport made us feel very welcome. But there were also singing and flowers and great rejoicing with those who had been at the Mariapolis.

Twenty-four hours in St. Croix and again the recounting of the old yet new story: from the horrors of the war to the wonderful discovery that God is love and the prayer for unity, program of the Movement.

Only ten days? Yes, they were only, ten short days of 24 hours yet when I landed at Kennedy it seemed to me I had left new York a century before.

And so continues the beautiful story of a work of God that silently grows and surprises the world with a reality more real that what we touch and see.

Sharry Silvi

1) cf. Mt 18:20.

MARIAPOLIS 1987

The Mariapolis gatherings are the summer meetings of the Focolare, held every year, for those who wish to come into contact with it.

For one week the Mariapolis offers to hundreds of people of all ages and walks of life a very full program that includes general sessions with talks on the spirituality of unity, sharing of experiences in living this spirituality, documentaries, meetings in small sharing groups and recreational programs. The Mariapolis is a time for prayer and recollection. The celebration of the Eucharist is at the center of each day and all participants gather together at the conclusion of the activities for evening prayer.

Children have separate activities which involve them in the life of the Mariapolis through various spiritual and recreational programs. Special programs are available for teenagers as well.

The week, however, is more than the sum of its parts. It is an experience of how life, also every day life, can be transformed if love and unity are its foundation. When the Mariapolis ends, people find that it was not only a tremendously enjoyable week, but they have experienced a way of living that they will be able to bring back home.

SOUTHWEST:

Las Cruces State University
Las Cruces, New Mexico
June 28, after supper -
July 4, after breakfast

MIDWEST:

Hope College
Holland, Michigan
July 12, after supper -
July 18, after breakfast

EAST COAST:

Mariapolis Luminosa
Hyde Park, New York
July 19, after supper -
July 25, after breakfast

Mariapolis Luminosa
Hyde Park, New York

July 26 including supper -
August 9, after lunch

Space is very limited.
If you are interested in attending please contact the Focolare Center nearest you.
(See inside back cover for addresses)

A "Center for Unity" in Great Britain

The new center hosted the first ecumenical meeting of bishops-friends of the Focolare Movement to be held in England.

(above) Different views of the Center for Unity at Welwyn Garden City, north of London.

by Enzo Maria Fondi

In Hertfordshire, a county north of London all covered with greenery, lies the oldest place of worship in the country: the cathedral-abbey of St. Albans and one of the most recent urban developments, Welwyn Garden City, a residential locality founded in 1948. We recognized these as indicators of a good location for a "Center for Unity" newly established by the Focolare Movement and supported from the early project stages by Cardinal Basil Hume, the Roman Catholic Archbishop of London, and by Archbishop Robert Runcie, primate of the Church of England. It is a house in which Christians of different traditions can return to their common roots in an atmosphere of fraternal charity fostered by the spirituality of unity.

November 16 to 22, 1986 was an important week in England. During those days three major events took place: the fifth annual ecumenical meeting of bishops-friends of the Focolare Movement, the inauguration of the Center for Unity, and the national meeting of members and friends of the Focolare in Kensington Town Hall of London.

Each of these events would merit their own coverage instead of the synthetic highlights recounted here due to limited space.

The Promise of Istanbul, The Events of London

In Istanbul in the fall of 1984 the idea developed of holding a meeting in London similar to the one taking place there in close proximity to the Orthodox Patriarchate. On that occasion, bishops of different churches met together over a period of several days in which talks were given and reflections and spiritual and pastoral experiences were shared, all deriving from their relationship with the spirituality of the Focolare. ►

London: At Lambeth Palace, the primate of the Church of England Dr. Robert Runcie, received in audience the bishops-friends of the Focolare Movement participating in the ecumenical meeting. Here Archbishop Runcie is seen with two Orthodox representatives: metropolitan Emilianos of Silivria and bishop Gennadios of Cratea.

Just as in Istanbul there was direct contact with the Patriarchate of Constantinople, in the person of Patriarch Demetrios I and the metropolitans who participated in the meetings, so too, meeting in England made it possible for a fuller and deeper relationship with the Anglican Church and its primate, the Archbishop of Canterbury.

This time, the bishops—20 of them from 4 continents—met in the new Center for Unity. Present were metropolitans Bartolomeo, Emilianos, and bishop Gennadios Zervos of the Greek Orthodox Church; bishops Dennis, Wood, and Bishop of the Anglican Church, bishop Kruse, president of the Evangelical Council of Churches in Germany, bishop Nelson Campos Leite, a Methodist bishop of Brazil and Roman Catholic bishops Henderson (England); Conti, Devine and Mone (Scotland); Hemmerle and Stimpfle (Germany); Schruers (Belgium), Grimaldi (Italy), Grahmann (United States), Lessa, Punder, Rodriguez Alves (Brazil). Metropolitan Bartolomeo brought the blessing of the Orthodox Patriarch Demetrios I as well as a personal message from him.

The theme of the conference was "The effects of the Word of God" which was introduced by a talk of Chiara Lubich video-taped for the occasion since she was not able to attend.

One of the deeply felt moments was the sharing of reflections and experiences in the light of the scripture verse Isaiah 55:10 wherein the word of God is compared to the rain and snow which waters the earth making it bring forth and sprout.

The group of bishops made a kind of ecumenical pilgrimage through London visiting several cathedrals: St Paul's (Anglican);

Dr. Runcie shared the following remarks as he welcomed the group of bishops to Lambeth Palace.

After giving thanks for the prayers of the Movement and for the support he receives in his travels throughout the world, Dr. Runcie said: "I have a message of unity to give and I need examples of it. People usually remain unmoved by philosophical and abstract topics. They need to hear life stories. The story of your Movement is one of the great Christian stories of this half century.... Every movement of the Spirit is contagious and spreads... There are moments in the life of the Church when lay people are needed to maintain ... the simplicity of faith.

A scene from the meeting with Dr. Runcie. From the left: Anglican bishop John Dennis, Dr. Runcie, Reverend Christopher Gill, in charge of ecumenical affairs for the Church of England, Gabriella Fallacara, a focolarina, director of Centro Uno of the Focolare Movement, John Sherrard of the Focolare of London, bishop Klaus Hemmerle of Aachen Germany.

Westminster Abbey (Catholic); St. Sophia (Orthodox) and the cathedral-abbey of St. Albans with its charming children's choir performing "Evensong," Anglican vespers.

Dr. Runcie, the Archbishop of Canterbury, gave the group a warm welcome to historic Lambeth Palace. (We include some of his remarks). The visit with the Archbishop concluded with an ecumenical prayer service in the chapel of Lambeth Palace followed by a reception.

Orthodox Archbishop Methodius received the bishops in the Cathedral of St. Sophia. In his cordial words of welcome he praised the courage, humility, wisdom and untiring efforts of John Paul II. On October 27, on the occasion of the historic World Day of Prayer for Peace at Assisi, Archbishop Methodius walked at the Pope's side.

Among the events of these days in London was another particularly noteworthy fact of meaning and promise.

During the meeting of bishops each year there is always time reserved for prayer and reflection on the very purpose of such a gathering.

The bishops formulate a pact of mutual love with the intention of going beyond all differences by emphasizing the only way to authentically and vitally be Christians, i.e., to put into practice the new commandment of Jesus.

This commitment which implies readiness to give even one's life for the other according to the example of Christ, comes before all doctrinal differences and every effort towards re-unification.

The location chosen for this pact, this act of reconciliation, was the Tower of London. In an interview in the "Church Times" the weekly newspaper of the Anglican Church, bishop John Dennis said it was his idea to choose the Tower. It is recognized, in fact, as a place of suffering and martyrdom for both Anglicans and Catholics and therefore it was an appropriate location for such a pact.

The bishops gathered in the chapel of St. Peter ad Vincula and prayed and asked forgiveness for a past of reciprocal persecutions and failures to listen to the Holy Spirit. The walls of the Tower of London were thereby witness to a vic- ►

London: The bishops-friends of the Focolare Movement participating in the ecumenical meeting of bishops are seen as they travel from the Center for Unity to Lambeth Palace.

tory of the gospel and to a reconciliation that only a few years ago—particularly within those walls—would have been impossible.

The Church Times quoted bishop John Dennis as saying at the conference's conclusion, "We truly became friends and brothers. We met as bishops not to judge one another's authenticity but rather to recognize each other as persons who have similar responsibilities in their respective churches. To live together, to share our spirituality was most invigorating and encouraging."

A Center for Unity

In 1981 at the end of the meeting with 500 members of the Movement in Great Britain, Chiara Lubich commented that the Focolare had reached great consistency in the country and now needed a cradle, meaning a Center, for meetings and formation.

In fact the need was felt for a center where everyone could be at home: Anglicans, Catholics, members of other churches who all share the spirituality of the Focolare.

Since that time, five years have passed. One marvels at God's Providence which never ceases to surprise and stimulate our faith. Incredible yet true is the gospel story of how an undertaking of the kind can start from nothing other than the conviction that its existence is in God's plans and arrive at buying and setting up the complex of buildings which would form the center. Little by little the funds necessary for such an enterprise came—as if by miracle—through the generosity of small and large contributions.

A Tent and not a Fortress

The opening address clarified the purpose and basis for a Center for Unity. The invited guests numbered 350 and included 30 bishops and dignitaries of different churches throughout Britain.

Dori Zamboni, one of Chiara Lubich's first companions, read a writing of Chiara's focusing on the spirituality of the Focolare, its principal activities and development, touching on the choice of God, the role of the Holy Spirit, mutual love, unity, the Word, and the Cross.

"Our spirituality," Chiara concluded, "is Christianity viewed from Jesus' last prayer."

The Anglican bishop of St. Albans, Bishop Taylor referred to this last sentence of Chiara's in his address. He expressed the hope that the theme of unity focused upon in such "a memorable talk which many of us would want to read and reread, will stimulate members of the Church of England to grow in the unity in Christ which is in accord with his will." Bishop Taylor referred to the words of the prophet Haggai to summarize his message of good wishes: "From this day on I will bless you." Originally these words were God's response to the conversion of Israel. Now

Catholic bishop Reinhard Punder from Brazil is seen strolling with the Methodist Bishop of Sao Paolo, Brazil, Nelson Leite, in front of the Center for Unity.

Anglican bishop, John Taylor of St. Albans, the Cardinal of Westminster, Basil Hume, and Reverend Stanley K. Chesworth of the English Methodist Conference are shown at the inauguaration of the Center for Unity.

Cardinal Hume, Archbishop of London, shared his impressions at the Inauguration of the Center for Unity.

The Archbishop spoke of three experiences of hope. The first was the World Day of Prayer for Peace on October 27, 1986 which gathered representatives of different churches and religions. That day was for him "a beacon of light." The second experience of hope took place at Lourdes where he accompanied a pilgrimage of 300 young people. "The third moment of hope," the cardinal said, "is this Center of Welwyn Garden City. Today's world is in extreme need for an authentic, simple and direct spirituality as that which will be offered here. The goal will be to grow in sanctity, a sanctity based on two words: love and unity."

The cardinal continued by saying that a "great spiritual center, in our times should be more of a tent than a fortress," meaning, not a place that closes off a community but rather that opens it to the needs of the world. "There are many people who are in desperate need of the gospel; who need to come to know God, to know they are loved and that their lives have meaning and purpose. It is only those," he continued, "who have had the great privilege of receiving the gift of God, of knowing him and his love, who are able to go out and bring the good news."

they can also be thought of as God's response to our "conversion to unity" and to our faithfulness to his Word.

Cardinal Hume, the Archbishop of London, then addressed the gathering. (see box)

The pro-nuncio bishop Barbarito, concluded by emphasizing that the specificity of the Movement lies in its vocation to unity, in giving witness to unity. Then, interpreting the feelings of all present, he expressed the hope that the work of the new center will blossom and grow.

There was a moment of prayer begun by the Reverend Stanley K. Chesworth, representative of the President of the Methodist Conference. Together Cardinal Hume, Bishop Taylor and Reverend Chesworth prayed for the Center and its visitors, for the unity of the Church, for peace and universal brotherhood.

The words shared and the feeling tone of the day made the message Chiara sent for the occasion seem so appropriate: "I turn in prayer to the Father who providentially gave us this Center so that it may fully achieve its goal to bear witness in society through the continual presence of Jesus in the midst of those who reside here and be a place of formation for those who pass by so as to prepare people who authentically 'relive Christ' in today's world."

The Focolare Fest

A thousand persons from throughout England, Scotland and Wales came to Kensington Town Hall, London, to celebrate the opening of the new center on Saturday November 22. It was a day of joy, reflection and participation. The different forms of commitment of persons present within the Movement were portrayed by several people. A family from Scotland, an Anglican focolarino, a woman volunteer of London and many others expressed the variety of callings to serve God.

The auxiliary bishop of Glasgow, John Mone shared his impression of the day: "There was unity, a family atmosphere, vibrant with life. It was interesting as well as full of love and hope." □

1987 Lenten Message of Pope John Paul II

During his trip to Colombia, South America, the Holy Father interrupted his official program to visit the hovel of a fisherman's family. The 15 persons who live together were moved by the unexpected visit.

"He has filled the hungry with good things, and has sent the rich away empty" (Lk 1:53).

These words, spoken by the Virgin Mary in her Magnificat, are at the same time a praise of God the Father and a call which each of us can take to heart and meditate upon during this Lenten season.

Lent is a time for conversion, a time for the Truth which "makes us free" (cf. Jn 8:32), since we cannot deceive the one who searches "the minds and the hearts" (Ps 7:9). In the presence of God our Creator, in the presence of Christ our Redeemer, in what can we take pride? What riches or what talents could give us a sense of superiority?

As for true riches, those which do not pass away, Mary teaches us that they come from God. We must long for them, we must hunger for them, putting aside what is artificial and passing, in order to receive these good things, and to receive them in abundance. Let us be converted, let us forsake the old leaven (cf. 1 Cor 5:7) of pride and of all that leads to injustice, contempt, and the thirst to possess for ourselves money and power.

If we recognize ourselves as poor in the presence of God (this being the truth, and not false humility) we will have the heart of one who is poor, the eyes and hands of the poor, in order to share the riches which God has lavished upon us: our faith, which we cannot keep selfishly for ourselves alone; hope, which those deprived of everything need so much; and charity which makes us love the poor as God does, with a preferential love. The Spirit of Love showers upon us a thousand good things to be shared; the more we seek them, the more we shall receive them in abundance.

If we are truly those "poor in spirit" to whom the kingdom of heaven (cf. Mt 5:3) is promised, then our offering will be acceptable to God. Even the material offerings which are part of our Lenten observance are riches if they are made with the heart of one who is poor, because we are giving what we have received from God so that it may be distributed: we only receive so that we may give. Just as the young boy's five loaves and two fishes were multiplied in the hands of Christ in order to feed the multitude, so will our offerings be multiplied by God for the poor.

Shall we come to the end of Lent with a conceited heart, full of our own importance, but with empty hands for others? Or led by the Virgin of the Magnificat, shall we find ourselves at Easter with the heart of one who is poor, starving for God, but with our hands filled with all God's gifts to be distributed to the world which needs them so much?

"Give thanks to God for he is good: his steadfast love endures forever" (Ps 117:1). □

(photo credit: UNICEF

FAMILY LIFE

Weakened family life is one of the greatest social ills of our time.
The "New Family" Movement has as its aim to bring the Focolare spirit of unity into family life, so that each family will be deeply united within itself and with other families.

THE CHALLENGE OF A SPECIAL MOMENT

PART V

We continue our series of articles on a particular phase of family life, that is, how parents relate to their young adult children. Teenagers sort out and test the values passed on to them and it is not unusual that they may find it difficult to communicate across the abyss of a generation. Living City asked Jim and Millie Komro, members of the New Family Movement, to share how they have tried to face the challenge.

Compiled by PHYLLIS SCARINGE

Jim: As a Wisconsin dairy farm boy with five brothers and three sisters, I remember from childhood being glad that seldom did we have to work or play alone. I can recall enjoying the farm field work but I will have to admit not liking being "ball and chained" to milking cows night and morning. However, self sufficience was important in our family so I left the farm and went to college.

With a year and a half remaining to finish school, Millie and I decided to marry. We had shared some strong experiences together: a serious family illness, a home house fire, our struggle through the college years. Our goals and objectives were the traditional ones: security, success and independence.

Millie: I was one of 15 children born and raised also in Wisconsin. I have very fond memories of my parents who offered us at lot of love and gave all of us a strong faith. With their love and togetherness and hard work, they made it possible for us to be a very normal family in spite of our family size. My dream in life was to get married and have a family. Jim was a part of that dream. We had been high school sweethearts.

During the first years of our marriage Jim continued his studies while I worked. Our first baby daughter came during that first year. We lived daily on a shoe string. We were happy but I couldn't wait until we would not have to scrimp and watch every penny. One and one half years later our second daughter arrived and Jim graduated from college. Our third and fourth daughters came within the next three years.

Jim: We moved from Wisconsin to Indiana and Millie and I became a "successful young family" with a lovely home in a nice neighborhood. We attended church on Sunday and sang in the choir. We were active in the community and rapidly moved into the upper social circles: not exactly "country clubbers" but on that track.

Millie: Our lifestyle had definitely changed. We began to socialize. With four small children to look after all week, it was refreshing to have our Saturday evenings out in the "real world." I can remember the fun I thought I was having only to awaken the next morning feeling empty. I began to desire a closeness to God. I

A recent photo of Jim and Millie Komro with their four daughters, son-in-law and the eldest of their two grandchildren.

joined Bible study groups, taught catechism, tried to be a good Catholic and a good wife and mother, yet I felt a void that I didn't know how to fill. My happiness seemed so temporary. I remembered praying specifically for a way to know what the will of God was for me. I was feeling very restless and not sure why I couldn't find the contentment and satisfaction I had dreamed of. After all, didn't I have the husband I loved and four beautiful children and the financial security and home I had dreamed about? I was doing all the right things that are supposed to make a person happy, wasn't I?

At this point we met a couple who had recently moved to our city. We were struck by the way they lived and treated others. One evening they invited us to their home. They told us how they tried to live the gospel in their daily lives. It was something we had never thought of actually, concretely doing. I was fascinated. I wanted to know more and more. This was how we first came in contact with Focolare.

A new horizon was opening before me and filling my life. God loved me and everyone. That meant also my husband and children. I should treat each neighbor I met during the day with the awareness that I was relating to Jesus. I could do God's will moment by moment.... In a very short time I began to view my family differently and all the daily situations that were getting to me. I'm not sure how or when it all happened but I no longer cared about climbing the social ladder. Jim and I found there was great joy in sharing what we had.

Of course our problems were not over but we began to change and as a consequence we faced our problems differently. I can share a recent experience with one of our daughters. She is the one who is chronically late. We had five minutes to get to Sunday Mass and were all ready to get in the car when I saw her in hair rollers. She said she would be right out. The minutes ticked bye. It was exasperating. My family knows that I never like to be late for anything. I was able to remain calm for just so long. I was about to go back into the house to let her know how inconsiderate she was being. Jim gently took my arm to stop me and reminded me of something we remind ourselves of often: it is more important to keep unity than, in this case, to be on time. He was right. I would have said the wrong thing in my growing impatience.

At that point she came running out apologizing to all of us. She had had trouble with her contact lenses and that had slowed her down. I was so glad Jim had reminded me of unity before everything. Our morning was not ruined by hasty words. And to our surprise, Mass was a few minutes late.

Jim: When we met the Focolare, Millie responded immediately while I eased into it slowly, analyzing every step of the way. I can only say, though, that it came at the right time for each one of us. Our daughters had reached their teen and pre-teen years and I was making the discovery that I was not as self-sufficient as I thought I was. I remember one of my first positive experiences in learning I could relate the gospel to all the moments of my day. One evening my daughter asked me to help her with her homework. I ►

Jim and grandson Ryan, age three. "Our daughters had reached their teen and pre-teen years and I was discovering that I was not as self-sufficient as I thought I was."

was intent on trying to complete a project to get the house ready for winter. I was determined to finish my project when the thought occurred to me: "Love one another as I have loved you." I put my work down and I can remember the moment of patience and peace I experienced as I went to help my daughter. It turned out to be an experience of mutual love because she was the one to help me finish my project.

Another time Millie and I were a bit worried about our teenage daughter's steady dating situation. We decided to talk to her about it but we agreed we would try to put aside our fears and worries in order to understand her and in so doing try to keep Jesus present among us.

When we told our daughter what we thought she became defensive, but we encouraged her to talk. I felt Millie's unity as we persisted in setting aside our parental "authority" to be one with our daughter's thoughts and feelings. The final result of that evening together was the beginning of a strong mutual trust.

About five years ago I was offered a job change within my company. It was a change I was interested in but it necessitated making a move to a different manufacturing plant, in a different city.

We had lived in our community for fifteen years and so it would be a big move for the family. One of our daughters, who was in the middle of high school, vehemently objected to moving. I tried to be ready to let go of my personal preference in order to be open to my daughter's feelings. It would have been easier to say: "Okay, we'll stay" but Millie and I felt that more was involved than just doing what we "wanted." What was important was to understand what God wanted for our family.

Finally we felt that to move was the right thing. Her opposition was a suffering for us but we continued to love her and try to keep the channels of communication open.

Nearly a year later our daughter shared with us that the move enabled her to separate from several involvements that were not really good for her.

Since our daughters are so close in age we had three in college at the same time. Over the years we had put aside savings

for college. At this point, though, there was a family we knew that was in greater need. We decided to give half the savings to them. Before our need ever arose for the money we gave away, we unexpectedly received twice over what we had given. It was a beautiful

Millie, daughter Lori and grandchild.

learning experience for us all that the more we share, the more we receive.

Millie: The real treasure in sharing this life with our family has been to see the joy in our children's lives as they attempt to follow the gospel. □

Millie Komro tells about a particular challenge

From a very early age I had a strained relationship with one of our four daughters. We argued constantly. I felt that my authority was being challenged and I would insist that she had no right to talk to me as she did. My other daughters resented their sister's behavior and I accepted their sympathy. Besides everything else, this had the affect of undermining the love relationship between the three girls and their sister. My daughter was only eight when this problem between us first began to surface.

It wasn't until she was in high school that I began to try to apply the sentences of the Gospel to my daily circumstances and make my first attempts to treat each neighbor with the awareness of the presence of Christ in them. It became clear then that I had to respond with the same concreteness in the painful relationship with my daughter. The words: "Love those who hurt you," kept ringing in my ears and other ideas I had heard like: "Be the first to love" and "Love without expecting anything in return."

I stopped raising my voice and arguing back. My daughter confided to a friend that I was different. She couldn't argue with me as before. Our relationship was beginning to change for the better.

She went off to college and our relationship remained friendly but because of all the memories and hurts we had experienced the friendliness remained superficial. We hugged and said we loved each other but it was always with reservation.

In her last year of college we learned that she had a severe eating disorder. If it continued it could become life-threatening. We tried to find help for her. Reluctantly she agreed to see a doctor for therapy. This was a beginning but after graduating from college she moved to another state several hundred miles away and the illness worsened.

One day she called home and admitted that it was serious. We had the name of a clinic in another state that had a two month treatment program but she did not want to ask for a leave of absence or jeopardize her job in any way. She was despondent.

My husband and I decided together that we had to do all in our power to help her. We called the clinic and talked to the person in charge. As God would have it, she was a friend ►

of my sister's and we had met a year ago. She was willing to work out a program which my daughter could do at home without having to leave her job and go to another state to the clinic. I could be the person to go through the therapy with her each day after work. She warned us that this had never been tried before and that it might not be successful. Jim and I prayed for guidance; we knew that all things are possible with God.

As the day neared to leave, I began to question whether I was the right person to go through therapy with her since I had most likely been a contributing cause to this illness. There was also a lot to leave behind: my family, my community obligations and parish commitments and my job (which I had to terminate). There was even a course I had to drop out of. But in praying for the right decision we recalled the word of life for that month: "If your brother has something against you, leave your offering there before the altar, go and be reconciled with your brother first" (Mt 5:23). This was our answer. We drew strength from these words.

The first week was wonderful. It was like a reunion. We went to a play together; we talked about the family. We seemed to have so much to share. Then the material arrived from the clinic and we began the sessions each evening after dinner for about two hours.

The second week was a disaster. I was supposed to help her change her eating and sleeping habits and she felt like a prisoner in her own home. She wanted to quit and she asked me to leave. I felt that I had failed her. I needed the strength that lies in the presence of Jesus among us[1] and I called home. Jim lived this suffering with me. He reminded me that both our daughter and I resembled Jesus when he cried out "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" on the cross. We renewed the pact of unity that we had made before I left in which we promised to unite ourselves in each suffering with Jesus on the cross. He also gave me some practical suggestions and my daughter agreed to try again.

By the third week I had become a better listener. What my daughter had to say required me to really put down all my defenses in order to love her. She brought up many painful memories, how she had felt unloved. I had always thought of myself as a good mother but now I had to admit my failures before her. It was so painful. Gradually she began to talk about her own past behavior and asked for forgiveness.

By the fourth week we were praying together and the program was going along successfully. She brought me flowers; we were enjoying each others company.

By the fifth week we were hugging each other and able to mean it when we said we loved each other. A real reconciliation had taken place. We were both so happy and I could also see that her illness was subsiding.

During the sixth week we began to prepare for the rest of the family to come and join us. It was their decision to come and pick me up and in that way we could spend Thanksgiving together. This daughter knew she felt differently now about her sisters but she was not sure how they would accept her. They had grown distant.

When they arrived, the miracle of love had already taken place. They greeted her with open arms; like old friends. The four girls talked through the night and went on long walks together.

Jim and I knew what the secret had been. It was our love, keeping Jesus present among us even at a distance, and our love for Jesus Forsaken. We were now a family meshed together with a special love. We were one.

□

1) cf. Mt 18:20.

"A Work Experiment"

The Leibholz brothers, owners of a metal foundry near Sao Paolo, Brazil have been pioneers in making important changes in the work conditions of their employees. We report here the results of their efforts to elicit greater participation in the work and management of the company.

Henry and Rudolf Leibholz, the owners, in the factory courtyard. They have been able to create a genuine work community.

interview by Giancarlo Predieri

Industrialization in Brazil is getting off the ground: unions, however, still have limited powers, oftentimes lay-offs need no justification or forewarning, medical insurance doesn't always cover the cost of medicines, workers salaries are usually very low. Multi-national corporations and many local industries have pretty much a free rein in regard to workers' rights but not all companies take advantage of this fact.

There are people who run things differently and who give priority to other values, like the owners of the metal foundry of Femaq in Piracicaba, a city of Sao Paolo, an area of industrial expansion.

The foundry was begun in 1966 by Kurt Leibholz, a humanitarian and altruistic person. Today it has 117 employees and is directed by Rudolph and Henry Leibholz who in this interview share with us their experience.

Question: How did it all begin?

Rudolph: When our father passed away in 1972 the company was passing through rough times. Henry and I were trying to carry the business ahead with the same criteria as our father but we both felt that something was missing, there was something more that we should do even though we didn't know what it was.

In 1979 we got to know some people in the New Humanity Movement of the Focolare. This encounter awakened a need in us to take a closer look at our Christian commitment. We started to study the documents of the Church, particularly the more recent social encyclicals. To be brief, we became aware of the fact that the goods of the earth belong to everyone and that we "owners" are only the administrators. At that time the Conference of Puebla had just taken place where the Pope had spoken of the "social mortgage" that weighs on "all" private property.

We could no longer wait. At the cost of sacrificing our peace and tranquility we decided we had to take the risk and embark on a new direction which would lead us we weren't sure where.

Henry: The problem was: Where do we begin? At the beginning of 1981 we found our point of departure in the theme promoted that year by the bishop's conference. Together with the doctor of our company we worked out a plan of ►

A monthly assembly meeting is held during work hours. Everyone participates from directors on down.

preventive medicine that was quick in bringing positive results. Then we tried to work on the problems of hygiene and safety. We hired a person as a safety inspector and worker accidents were soon impressively reduced.

Rudolph: But this was still very little. The next idea, developed with the other managers, was to create a social development department which would be at the same level as the financial, technical, administrative and accounting departments. This social development department was established with a fund taken from the company profits and 3 per cent of the gross wages of the employees. It was set up to assist those in need and was distributed without discrimination. 26.6 per cent of the profits of the 1984 balance went into this common fund.

Henry: Prior to this we had experimented with 2 other attempts at profit-sharing which were not as successful as this plan.

Question: Was this common fund, managed by the social development department, a valid alternative?

Rudolph: "Considering the economic, legal and human context we live in, it has shown very good results. That doesn't mean, however, that we must always continue to do the same thing. We are at the beginning of this experience and we are open to new solutions as we go along. For our part we do not want to wind up creating a paternalistic system; we could unintentionally fall into that. For now these idea are working out well."

Question: What results have you attained so far?

Rudolph: First off, the fact alone that we survived the crisis of 1982 is a positive result. To give you an idea of the dimensions of the recession here, let me say that by 1982 only 950 companies survived out of th 1500 that existed in 1975. Our company, too, had to resort to extreme measures and reduce personnel. It was a matter of survival. It was a decision we agonized over as you might imagine.

It was the beginning of August 1981 and we decided to postpone the lay-offs until the end of the month so that the workers would at least get an additional paycheck since that month had 3 instead of 2 pay periods.

Then for the thorny task of deciding who would be let go we began with the single men who did not have family responsibilities, then those who had wives or children with incomes, the families who had more than 1 person employed in the company, etc.

Once this list was made, we called together all the employees involved to explain the situation the company was in and that there were no other alternatives we could find. It was certainly a painful moment but not one of rebellion. The employees understood our decision; they were aware of the lay-offs going on everywhere and they did not want to add to our difficulties. The following day we called together the rest of the employees to explain the lay-offs and to reassure them about the stability of their jobs.

We maintained the availability of medical services and the social development fund for those laid off. We looked for jobs for them among the other foundries of the city and within 3 months we were able to place everyone. This was how we tried to meet this painful situation and maintain good relations with everyone. When the economy improved several returned and others are still waiting for the chance to come back.

Another result of these new policies was an unexpected increase in production. Today we produce 19 to 20 kilograms per man-hour while in the rest of the country the average is 12 to 13 and in the most technologically advanced foundries production is between 22 and 25. But our greatest source of satisfaction is the level of participation and responsibility

of each employee in the management of the company. This is shown in employee readiness to help, the seriousness in their work commitments, the spontaneous contribution of ideas to improve production techniques and a greater capacity to work as a team.

Question: What would you consider to be the principal cause of these results?

Henry: Oddly enough I think it is the fact that we do not worry about results as the most important thing. Our major concern is to put the person, the worker in the first place, as the subject and not as an object or instrument. The workers feel that their dignity is respected, and as a result they work better and produce more. It is different from what happens in a simply capitalistic or socialistic framework in which the high-sounding words and beautiful declarations can not hide utilitarian goals. Therefore, once we have taken care of the minimum conditions of subsistence for the company, as is obviously necessary, we try to direct our efforts to the development of the whole person. We have learned that the worker's sense of fulfillment on the job is as important as his pay check. We have noticed that the workers at Femag are no longer tense, they have become more sociable, relationships among all have improved, even outside the factory within their families.

Question: How about the problem of strikes which are on the increase in many countries and are a threat to production and to the authorities?

Rudolph: The workers themselves will tell you that the problem doesn't exist here. Even if there are many areas that need improvement, they are not sufficient reason to resort to measures as serious as striking. And thanks to everyone's cooperation many of the improvements that unions have recently obtained for workers are rights and privileges already being enjoyed by our employees. For example, mothers are allowed to nurse their babies during work hours. Employees are allowed 2 hours a day for this and a company driver takes them home and brings them back. When a family member needs to go to the doctor the employee does not have to lose a day in order to accompany them because the company provides someone to pick them up and bring them to our medical department. Even medications—which are not covered by insurance in Brazil—are taken care of through the social development fund.

There are other examples like these that I could tell you about. The workers realize that striking is damaging both to the company and to each employee. Clearly this presupposes that the employees trust the good intentions of management otherwise everything would become difficult.

Henry: Absenteeism is another problem which practically does not exist, not even on Monday. Also we do not make use of a common practice here of letting go of people when they reach a

(Continued on page 28)

At Femaq the work atmosphere is usually relaxed. The experience has been that the worker's sense of fulfillment on the job is as important as his pay check.

WORD OF LIFE

"Authentic worshipers will worship the Father in Spirit and truth" (Jn 4:23)

"Authentic worshipers will worship the Father in Spirit and truth."

These words come from the conversation between Jesus and the Samaritan woman. At a certain point the woman brought up a long-standing issue dividing Jews and Samaritans regarding the place of authentic worship. Our ancestors—she said—worshiped on this mountain, (Mount Gerizim) but you people claim that Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship God. What should we do? Where should true worship take place? Where can we find God?

Jesus answered the woman and revealed that the time had come when God's presence was no longer bound to a specific place. God is to be worshiped in Spirit and truth.

"Authentic worshipers will worship the Father in Spirit and truth."

When Jesus spoke about worshipping in Spirit and in truth he was not saying that worship should be purely interior, completely detached from every exterior element and form. He was not implying that external and public acts of worship such as the liturgical assembly, community prayers, singing and so on, no longer had any value. He was, instead, referring to the perfect form of adoration that he had come to inaugurate.

Nor was worship for Jesus "in Spirit and in truth" in contrast with worship offered to God in the Temple of Jerusalem or, in general, in Judaic tradition. On the contrary. Jesus himself had just affirmed: "Salvation is from the Jews" (Jn 4:22).

With his coming, the "place" where God manifests his presence is the very person of Jesus. It is through and in union with him—in his Spirit of truth—that we are now to offer to the Father the worship he expects of us.

"Authentic worshipers will worship the Father in Spirit and truth."

What does it really mean, though, to "worship the Father in Spirit and in truth"?

The "Spirit" is the Holy Spirit, the gift that the Father has given us through Jesus in order to transform our hearts, make us understand the words of Jesus and help us to concretize them in our lives.

The "truth" is the truth that the Father reveals to us through his son Jesus. It is the word that Jesus speaks to us in the name of the Father; it is Jesus—the Truth.

At this point the meaning becomes clear. We worship and glorify the Father when, under the action of the Holy Spirit, we make the effort to walk in the way of truth that Jesus taught us. The new worship that the Father wants from us is a life lived totally in conformity with the words of Jesus.

"Authentic worshipers will worship the Father in Spirit and truth."

This word of life tells us something very important: the most beautiful gift we can give God is to live the words of Jesus. Our heavenly Father receives great joy from seeing that we try to put into practice the teachings of his son.

True worship, offering an authentic sacrifice lies in living the commandments of Jesus: humility, detachment from possessions, sincerity, prudence, justice, fortitude in difficulties and trials, mercy, service of neighbor. Authentic sacrifice consists above all in our harmony, in loving one another.

Let us let ourselves be set afire then by the Holy Spirit. Let us allow him to enlighten us about his words and above all about his new commandment. Let us cooperate with the interior impulse he gives us to fulfill them. In so doing we will have accomplished the act of worship which is most pleasing to God. We will have offered him the most perfect praise.

Chiara Lubich

EXPERIENCES

The following are experiences in living the Gospel which some of our readers shared with us.

What was most important

After being married a short time, my daughter and son-in-law experienced a crisis in their marriage. As a result, my daughter and grand-daughter came to stay with me.

After having lived with me for almost five months, my daughter and her husband decided to go back together again. She moved out last Friday.

When I came home that evening, the house seemed very empty. There was no little voice calling, "grandma, grandma," as soon as I walked in the door. I ran downstairs and the bed was no longer there. There were some old toys sitting on top of a box. I could feel how Mary must have felt when she lost Jesus in the temple. I missed them terribly, but at the same time I felt a joy inside because after a period of struggle the fruit was now there: they were reconciling.

Saturday morning came and I did not hear anything from them. I feared that my daughter might have left with hard feelings. I was torturing myself with the thought that, if it were true, she might not bring my grand daughter to see me anymore. I could not concentrate on what I was doing.

Then I remembered the Word of Life, "Let us then cast off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light."[1] I reminded myself that what was most important was the fact that they were together again. Their happiness and family unity was what counted most. I went to Church that morning and I entrusted them to God. I had done all I could to foster this reconciliation. Now my task was to continue with "the armor of light" by turning my attention to the rest of the family.

After lunch my daughter called. They did not have a phone yet, but she wanted me to know that they were all right. I could sense a joy in her voice. I cried, but it was with tears of joy. I hoped that this would be the beginning of a new life for them. I prayed that someday they would come to know this way of life focused on love, that could be also for them a source of unity and strength.

E.H.

1) Rm 13:12.

Walking down the hallway

One day I was walking down the hallway of the school where I teach and noticed that the custodian looked unhappy. I asked how things were going. He replied, "I'm just fine but I can't wait to get out of here today."

I continued down the hallway to get my morning cup of coffee with this man's sad-looking face still on my mind. He was usually a happy person; this was very unlike him. I went to his small workshop with about fifteen minutes to spare before going back to class.

The Word of Life that we were living: "Let us then cast off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light," made me want to love this neighbor who was in pain as perfectly as I could. I had no intention of giving him advice; I was there to listen. I told him that something seemed to be bothering him and asked if there was anything I could do to help. With that he began telling me of a recent disagreement with the principal. He was told not to do the extra kinds of things he did for the children and the teachers. He usually made coffee for the teachers and did many things that went beyond the duties of a custodian. Probably the principal thought he was wearing himself out unnecessarily. He followed orders and stopped doing them but he had become very unhappy with his work.

After a few minutes we could talk about other things and his mood brightened. The moment seemed right to point out the good intentions of the principal. She was most likely concerned for his welfare. He acknowledged that but added that she had, however, taken away the most enjoyable part of his work. He thanked me for caring enough to come and talk about it.

This experience made me more aware of other opportunities to love my neighbor. I also know that when the moment is right I will talk to the principal about how we can find a way to let the custodian continue to serve others.

T. R.

Can you love people you don't like?

Question: How can you love people who are difficult? People who are obnoxious or do obnoxious things turn me off right away! Is unity possible also with these people?

L.B.

Answer: What makes us like or dislike a person is based oftentimes on subjective impressions which can be caused by many different elements. It can and does happen that someone we don't like is liked by others. The opposite can also be true. Others may not get along with a person with whom we do. These simple observations are enough to make us see that our impressions of other people are not always right. The fact is that every person has his or her good points. On the other hand, no one is perfect and that includes us. We also have our shortcomings, faults, defects and we also are liable to do things that displease others in some way.

For this reason, we may be struck in some people by attitudes we like and in others by things that turn us off or about which we disagree.

We need not be surprised; this is simply human nature! But if we give up and for the rest of our lives hold onto our dislikes we will only be impoverishing ourselves. We will be stopping ourselves from forming relationships with a lot of people who instead have a gift to give us: the gift of their positive personal characteristics.

How can we build a relationship then with people that we have a natural inclination to dislike? I think the "golden rule" applies well. "Treat others the way you would have them treat you."[1]

I know how much I would want other people to see more than my shortcomings or at least give me the chance to correct them! Then I can try to do the same for them and learn to never typecast a person: "He's like this ..., she's that way...." I can make the effort to cancel out of my mind the preconceived ideas I have of them so that I can see them "new" each day, as if I were meeting them for the first time.

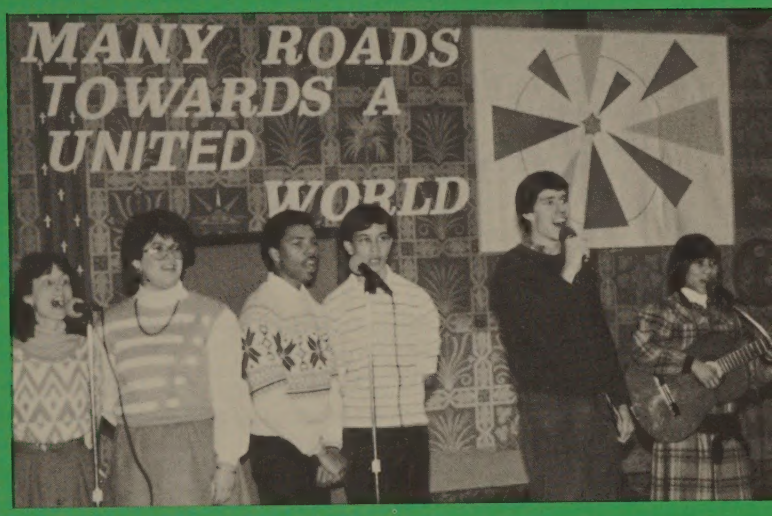
How much I would want others not to judge me superficially! I can try then not to stop at "the speck" I see in someone else's eye but instead make the effort to discover and maximize his or her good points. Even if I find only one (but there are certainly more!) I can emphasize that one and in doing so build up a better impression of that person.

Granted, this is not easy. But if we love only the people who love us, what kind of love is it? It is a matter of using our will to look at reality in greater depth. And if—just the same—the negative points of the other person continue to bother us, our love which has to be more than spontaneous feelings, will be enriched by the patience, humility, and mercy we have exercised ... along with the other characteristics of love which we already exercise with the people we like, perhaps without realizing it. It is a matter of practice in order to have

GENFEST 1987

For a United World

The 1987 North American GENFEST
will be held
at Mariapolis Luminosa
Hyde Park, New York
on April 26



"The Youth for a United World Movement: what is its purpose? To contribute towards uniting the world. What is its method? To follow all roads that lead to unity. What is its spirit? Christ, whom each one of you will seek to bring alive again in your hearts by living the Word. We will walk with determination along the various roads that offer solutions to the divided world by uniting it...."
(from Chiara Lubich's address to the participants of the 1985 Genfest)

Contact the Focolare Center nearest you for details.
(see inside back cover for addresses)

the same attitude towards everyone. And like all forms of practice, it implies hardwork, effort, commitment to start over and over a thousand times. What will come of it? The first result will be to find that little by little it is possible to build a new relationship with everyone. You will experience the tremendous joy of being able to approach every person and go beyond every barrier. Try it and you will see!

And your own personality? It will certainly be re-inforced and enriched by a relationship with someone you previously underrated. It will come almost as a surprise to realize that your heart has opened wide its doors and is becoming always more capable of accepting everyone you meet. If it was possible with that person ("Of all people!" we may think), then why not with everyone.

We often hear it said that in our technological society we need an additional amount of "soul." Couldn't it perhaps mean that we need people who are able to look at others as God sees them (with love) in order to discover and make shine in everyone that certain something which is unique in every person, even in those who seem obnoxious to us? We can try then to become people whose hearts are opened so wide that we are able to melt away prejudices not only among individuals but among countries, among opposing groups who consider each other enemies because they do not know that they are brothers and sisters.

Carlos Claria

1) Mt 7:12.

(Continued from page 23)
certain wage level to hire someone else to do the same job for a lesser wage. For these reasons people are more secure in their jobs and work with greater serenity.

Rudolph: We try to take special care in personal contacts. We periodically have assemblies during work hours in which everyone participates, even the directors. In these assemblies we discuss what relates to our field on a worldwide and national level, the specific problems in our field, the successes and difficulties of the company, investments to be made, plans for the future, and the like. These assemblies are a time of shared participation. Everyone has a right to speak, to express their opinions and make requests and everyone's opinion is respected and considered. We even have general written evaluations (where anonymity is maintained) on company policies and services. The last evaluation had the following results which was like an indicator, a balance sheet of the social services of the company: 95 per cent of the company rated the medical and social services as very good or good; 72 per cent gave similar ratings to hygiene and safety; 89 per cent rated the work atmosphere very good or good, 81 per cent gave those ratings to the periodic assemblies and 62 per cent voted for the setting up of a factory committee.

Question: What criteria do you use for the distribution of the money in the common fund?

Henry: Our experience has been that in order to make these decisions seriously and fairly we have to examine each case individually. The social development department assumes the major part of this job by making home visits, conducting interviews, and the like, so that the amounts are proportionate to the needs and are decided upon after careful evaluation. Then, according to each one's ability, the employees take on commitments to repay the common fund without interest notwithstanding the high inflation rates we are living with. The time frame also varies from case to case. Only occasionally is money given from the fund that is not returned. In so doing we try to avoid acting paternalistically and still stimulate a sense of social solidarity and the awareness that—within limits—everything belongs to everyone.

Question: Have you thought about formulating these accomplishments in some kind of statutes, institutionalizing them?

Rudolph: We are not against the idea as long as the structures continue to be at the service of people. At this time the present structures, although rudimentary, are sufficient. As our experience grows we will keep the idea in mind.

However we don't want to give undue importance to institutionalizing anything because we are convinced that the solutions to the problems—in the final analysis—lie in the spirit of solidarity that—notwithstanding everything—is deeply rooted in the heart of each person. It cannot be a structure that compels someone to live like this. It will always be living examples that convince and attract."

Question: This is true but don't you think example has to start from the top?

Henry: If we weren't convinced of this we never would have begun this experience. This is so true that one of the first provisions we felt the need to make was to reduce the disparity in salaries. We raised the bottom, the lower salaries, and decreased the top salaries beginning with our own. At present the proportional difference is from 1 to 12 while the average in Brazil for our field is estimated at 1 to 60.

Rudolph: We try to maintain a modest personal and family life style. Only last year was I able to own my own home. Many people do not understand why we go to work on motorbikes or in small economy cars rather than in limousines or expensive luxury cars but our goals lie elsewhere. Our priority is that we and all who work with us grow as human beings.

To sum it all up, we're trying to discover how to run a company according to a Christian vision (which is also a deeply human vision) of the person. Notwithstanding our mistakes and shortcomings we are always more deeply motivated to continue in this direction. We are convinced, in fact, that real wealth, as well as the solution to the problems of humanity which includes the problems of the workplace lie in the sharing, the communion among all. □

What is the Focolare Movement?

THE BEGINNINGS

FOCOLARE means "hearth," "family fireside." What first strikes people when they come in contact with members of the Focolare, whether in small groups or in large gatherings, is the atmosphere of a family. It is a family formed by many different people in various walks of life. The Focolare Movement is also known as the "Work of Mary." Under this name it was approved by Pope John XXIII in 1962.

The Focolare Movement began in 1943 in Italy. In the midst of the terrible destruction of World War II, Chiara Lubich realized that God is the only one worth living for. As a result, she began to center her life on the Gospel, together with a small group of young women who followed her. Their ideal became one of striving toward the fulfillment of Jesus' last prayer to the Father: "May they all be one" (Jn.17:21).

The life of Chiara and her first companions, and the spiritual way they spontaneously followed, gave rise to the unique form of spirituality of the Focolare Movement, a spirituality of unity. It has proved to be a powerful means of introducing the Gospel into modern life, of going to God together.

WHO ARE THE FOCOLARINI

Single men and women live in separate communities called Focolare Centers. Their principal aim is to achieve unity among themselves through mutual charity practiced twenty-four hours a day. They follow the evangelical counsels of poverty, chastity and obedience. They work as other laymen and women in regular jobs and professions.

Some married persons, even though continuing to live in their families, participate fully in the life of either the men's or women's Focolare Centers in their common effort to achieve this same unity. They are called "Married Focolarini" and form the backbone of a vast Movement within the Movement, called the New Family Movement.

THE VOLUNTEERS AND THE NEW HUMANITY MOVEMENT

The Volunteers, also called the "Volunteers of God," are a large group within the Focolare Movement; they would like to transform all human realities according to the Gospel spirit. The Volunteers are the backbone of the mass movement called New Humanity. The aim of this Movement is to help form a society made of men and women who are made "new" by the Gospel message and who can then bring new life to all fields of human activity (education, business, etc.). This results in new social relationships which, in turn, lead to the realization of new structures of society.

GEN

The new generations of the Focolare Movement form another Movement or, better, three movements: the Gen 2, the Gen 3 and the Gen 4 Movements, divided according to their various age groups. "Gen" stands for new generation. The Gen have committed themselves to living the Gospel message of love and to sharing with other youth the conviction they have that the Gospel is the answer to every question and the motive for everything they do.

THE MOVEMENT AMONG THE RELIGIOUS

Men and women religious — although they live according to their own rules and constitutions and are already a distinct part of the Church through their religious families — can also be associated with the Focolare.

Contact with the Movement helps them to focus their attention on the specific charism of their founders, and to see how it can be lived in the present time.

PRIESTS — PRIESTS' MOVEMENT —SEMINARIANS — PARISH MOVEMENT

Many diocesan priests are committed to living the spirituality of the Focolare Movement. Some of them live in community. They form the backbone of the Priests' Movement which is made up of priests who live the spirituality of unity.

FOCOLARE FAMILY

The largest group within the Focolare Movement is made up of men, women and young people who are connected with the Movement without having any formal ties with it. Their bond of unity stems from their acceptance of its spirit and their desire to live it.

ECUMENISM

The Movement not only crossed the political boundaries of more than 100 countries, it has also gone beyond the barriers erected for centuries between the various Christian Churches.

Ecumenical activities take place in the different parts of the world where the Movement exists.

In the past few years a promising, ongoing dialogue has been established with faithful of other religions.

SUMMER MARIAPOLIS

Summer meetings are held every year for those interested in the Movement and for those who wish to come into contact with it. For one week persons of all ages and walks of life are exposed to the spirituality of unity. Above all, they strive to practice it by creating among themselves a rapport that molds them into a community. It is intended to be a basic experience of such intense unity that the people will be able to bring it back into their own environments. And this is the most striking fruit of these conventions. They tend to be models of a world which lives according the Gospel.

PERMANENT MARIAPOLIS

The need to prolong the experience of the summer meetings brought about the birth of small cities called Permanent Mariapolis. They are made up of young men and women, as well as whole families, who are there for a designated period of time to be formed according to the Gospel spirit of unity.

They also attend classes in Sacred Scripture, Theology and Sociology and work for their own support.

MARIAPOLIS CENTERS

In addition to the Permanent Mariapolis, there are Mariapolis Centers, which are training centers for the members of the Movement.

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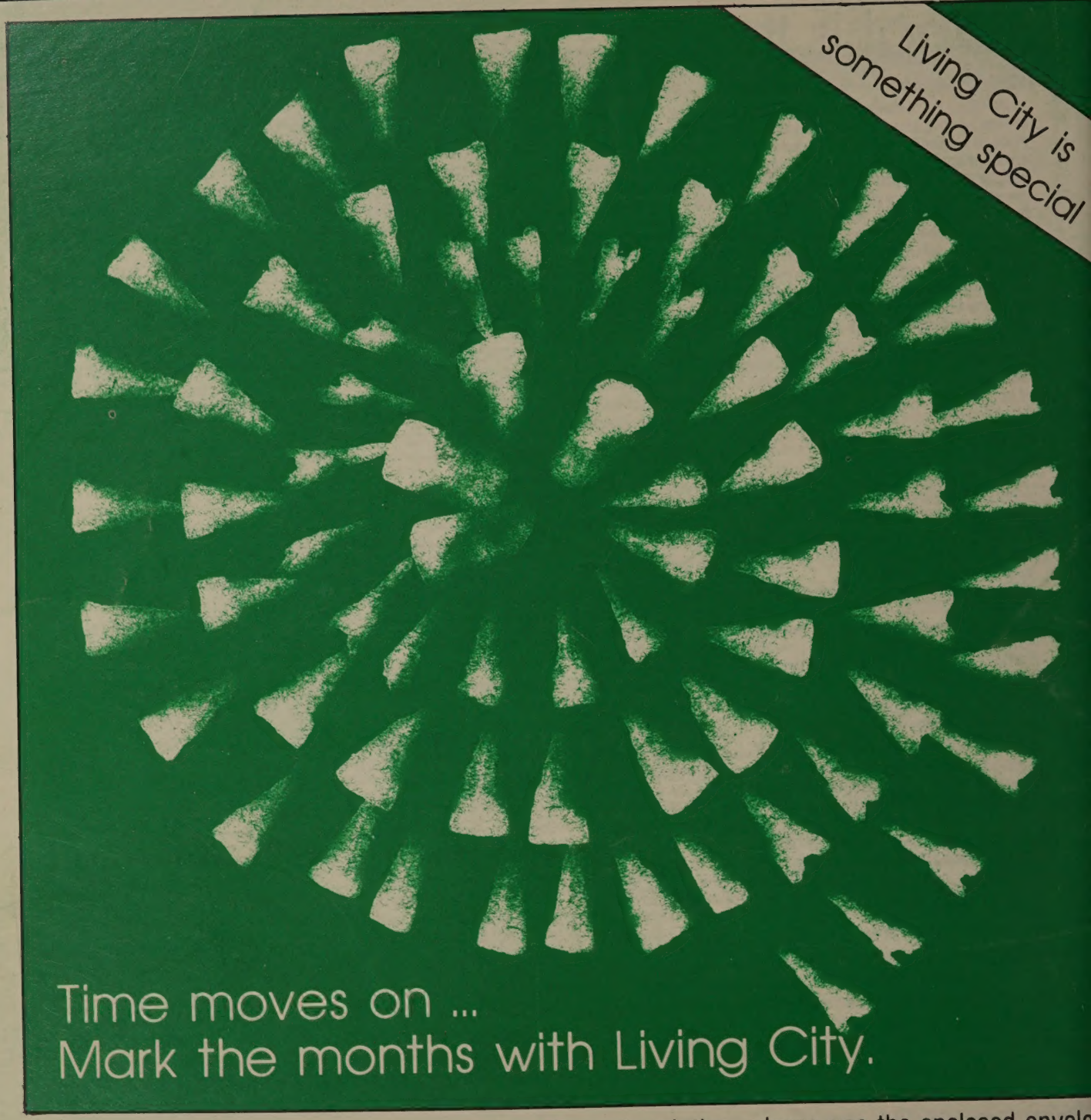

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